

LaRouche Dems Battle Gore for Soul of the Democratic Party

by Debra Hanania-Freeman

When Lyndon LaRouche launched his campaign for the year 2000 Democratic Presidential nomination in January 1999, he did so with the issuance of a book, *The Road to Recovery*. In the very first paragraph, LaRouche told the reader, "It is time to rebuild that Democratic Party of core constituencies, which President Franklin Roosevelt forged under the crisis conditions of the earlier Great Depression. All of the related considerations of this attached report, titled 'The Road to Recovery,' are implied in that proposed campaign-slogan for the Democratic Party's Year 2000 Presidential primaries."

Those who know LaRouche, know that he rarely engages in rhetoric. His assertion that it was time to rebuild the Democratic Party of FDR was based on the fact that, in the midst of the Great Depression, when this nation faced destruction, FDR's leadership saved this nation by forging a coalition, a Democratic Party based on what he called the "forgotten man." It was a social force that gave him the power to do what he knew had to be done to save the nation: to take on the "economic royalists" and to break the back of Wall Street. He "reinvented" the Democratic Party as the party that would stand up to Wall Street. It was the only way FDR could force through the social and other programs that were necessary to protect the general welfare of the vast majority of the American people.

Gore Ends Party of FDR and JFK

Al Gore, and a small gaggle of operatives in the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) Washington, D.C. office who have, at least for the moment, seized control of the party, have a completely opposite view. Indeed, in what is being hailed as Gore's final consolidation of his control over the Democratic Party, the DNC produced a "draft" 2000 Democratic Party Platform that the U.S. media are calling "the final obituary for the Democratic Party of FDR and JFK."

The draft platform was unveiled almost immediately upon

the adjournment of a day of hurriedly planned "Platform Hearings" held in St. Louis on July 6. CSPAN, which broadcast the "hearings" live, indicated in its coverage that the DNC had convened the hearings in response to what CSPAN called "a minor revolt" in party ranks that resulted in the historic Ad Hoc Democratic Platform Hearings, facilitated by LaRouche's campaign, that had occurred in Washington, D.C. on June 22.

If the carefully orchestrated DNC hearings were meant to parody the Washington hearings in form, they certainly did not in either intent or content.

The St. Louis hearings were announced with less than one week's advance notice. The witnesses had all been pre-selected, and requests by leading trade union and Democratic elected officials, including several who played key roles in the Ad Hoc Hearings, for an opportunity to present testimony, were promptly denied. Highly placed sources close to the DNC report that Elaine Karmarck, a senior Gore policy adviser, oversaw every aspect of the drafting process, and had made it very clear from the outset that anything that didn't mirror Gore themes would not be allowed.

North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt, who is counted among those being considered to be Gore's running mate, chaired the drafting committee. At a St. Louis press conference following the day's last witness, Hunt declared, "You don't win unless you appeal to Republicans and Independents. This is a platform that does that." A clearly pleased Karmarck, who held court in the back of the room, said, "This is a Gore document. It reflects his campaign policies. It reflects the themes he talks about. And, it reflects the fact that he is in firm control of the party, that he has beat back any and all opposition."

The draft committee must submit its final document to the actual Democratic Platform Committee, chaired by Sen. Richard Durbin (Ill.), at a meeting in Cleveland on July 29.

After that, delegates to the Los Angeles National Democratic Convention will weigh whether or not to give final approval to the document. Gore operatives say final approval is a mere formality. Indeed, they say, the absence of any internal party conflict over the platform is so absolute, that Gore's DNC Chairman Joe Andrew has indicated that he sees no reason to even schedule a floor debate on the platform during the Aug. 14-17 Convention. In the end, this may turn out to be "whistling past the graveyard."

Indeed, the historic Ad Hoc Platform Hearings were necessitated by the DNC's refusal to host comprehensive hearings. The DNC argued publicly that "since the economic fundamentals are sound," there was no reason to do so. In fact, however, there is more to the story.

The Gore operatives who control the DNC believe that Gore's quest for the Presidency is dependent on the party's ability to appeal to what they call "New Democrats" — largely yuppie suburbanites who supported the Gingrich revolution — and to do so at the expense of the party's traditional constituency groups. One Gore operative admitted that platform hearings would only highlight the vast differences between what Gore represents, and what those constituencies, which are largely comprised of that 80% of the American people who make up the lower-income brackets, both want and need. Gore strategists argue that "those people" will vote for Gore anyway, because "they have nowhere else to go."

The draft platform the Gore crowd produced in St. Louis is a striking escalation of their destruction of the party. And, many Democratic leaders are quietly conceding that, if it is allowed to stand, it will not only pave the way for a Bush victory in November, but that it will also mean defeat for Democrats at every level of government.

A leading member of the Congressional Black Caucus, who asked that he not be named for fear of Gore reprisals, said, "I don't know why it is so hard for these boys to understand that the issue is not that our folks will vote for Bush or vote Republican. They won't. But, they just won't come out. And, as long as the Gore people keep this up, there ain't nothing we're going to be able to do or say to get folks to come out."

Why should they? Karmarck and Hunt are absolutely correct when they say the platform they have produced is one that Republicans and Independents can support. Karmarck's characterization: "It's true that the old Democratic Party created the New Deal and the Great Society and, unfortunately, all the domestic spending programs that went with them. But, today, Al Gore believes we should pay down the debt every year until we can give our children, the independence, self-sufficiency, and prosperity that will come from an America that is debt-free. And, that is what the platform says." Indeed, it is what the platform, sounding more like a Republican manifesto of fiscal conservatism, says.

Karmarck continued, "The old Democratic Party supported a lot of bad trade legislation; protectionist stuff. But today, Al Gore has made the Democratic Party the party of

free trade. Republicans talked about welfare reform, but Al Gore's leadership made us the party that reformed welfare. Al Gore has made the Democratic Party the party of fiscal discipline. Remember, we eliminated the deficit. Listen to Al Gore's speeches. He is going to reject these efforts by the advocacy groups to use our surplus for a major injection of money into existing and new programs. Al Gore will make sure the surplus funds are used for debt reduction. The old Democratic Party was the home of peace advocates and opponents of the Vietnam War. Today, under Al Gore's leadership, Democrats support an interventionist 'forward engagement' military policy. And, on top of all of this, we are responsible for the greatest economic boom in postwar history."

And, although Karmarck didn't refer to it, the platform endorses tougher penalties, including the death penalty, for violent criminals. When asked what really distinguishes the Democratic platform from the GOP platform, Karmarck was quick to note that the Democratic Party is pro-choice, and "supports the full inclusion of gay and lesbian families in the life of the nation."

LaRouche Presents a Different Direction

When LaRouche addressed the Ad Hoc Platform Committee, he presented a totally different direction. And, his testimony set the stage for all of the witnesses who followed. He said, "We have the worst financial crisis in modern history. . . . We need programs to deal with it . . . and we need leadership, leadership typified in the past by people like Abraham Lincoln and President Franklin Roosevelt. With that combination, we can survive. . . . We will fix up our infrastructure, go back to high levels of productive employment, restore our health-care systems, restore our power systems, restore our transportation systems, restore our education system, and get some good old-fashioned clean morality into our nation. Under those conditions, we can survive. That, I think, is the guts of the platform which the Democratic Party must shape during this coming period."

The battle lines couldn't be clearer. The only question that remains is which view will prevail. There is no question that LaRouche stands as the man who not only represents the tradition established by Democrats like FDR and JFK, but who, unlike Gore, is prepared to challenge the interests of Wall Street to protect the interests of the vast majority of the American people. It is no surprise that Gore has resorted to outright thuggery and vote stealing in an attempt to lock LaRouche out of the August convention. But, LaRouche has pledged to dedicate his campaign apparatus to the production and distribution of 1 million copies of the full proceedings of the Ad Hoc Democratic Platform Hearings between now and the convention. And, there is nothing Gore can do to stop that, or to stop what some believe will be the almost inevitable revolt that it will produce. (For copies of the proceedings or for a 90-minute videotape featuring the highlights, contact the campaign committee, LaRouche's Committee for a New Bretton Woods at 1-800-929-7566.)